

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 14, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We urge you to rescind your nomination of William Perry Pendley to serve as the Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and immediately revoke his authority as Acting Director. By statements and actions aggressively hostile to environmental laws and the specific mission of the Bureau of Land Management, Pendley has shown himself to be singularly unqualified for this position and generally unfit for public service. He has repeatedly sought to undermine the Bureau and impede its mission. He has engaged in unethical conduct in other settings and his voluminous work for polluters and corporate special interests creates stark conflicts of interest once again now. He has repeatedly displayed open hostility towards racial and religious minorities, the LGBTQ community, and Native American communities. In short, he is the absolutely wrong choice for this crucial position.

Pendley is emphatically unqualified to lead the Bureau of Land Management, whose mission is to “sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.”¹ Pendley’s decades-long career demonstrates not only a contempt for the value of protecting public lands but an active interest in exploiting public lands and dismantling the federal agencies charged with their protection. In 2016, he wrote an article for the National Review falsely arguing that “The Founding fathers intended all lands owned by the federal government to be sold”² and has urged the government to “Sell all lands E. of the Mississippi.”³ He also previously opposed the bipartisan reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), taking a stunning extreme position which makes him unsuited to oversee the BLM’s implementation of the recently-enacted Great American Outdoors Act.

Pendley frequently advertises his disdain for bedrock environmental laws. He has advocated abolishing the Antiquities Act, claimed that the National Environmental Policy Act is a “weapon to kill jobs”⁴ and referred to the Endangered Species Act as “a joke.”⁵ He has also already sought to undermine the Bureau’s important work from within, presiding over the BLM’s chaotic and disruptive relocation from Washington D.C. to Grand Junction Colorado, a move that has

¹ <https://www.blm.gov/about/our-mission>

² <https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/01/federal-government-should-sell-western-land-follow-constitution/>

³ <https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1061110671/>

⁴ https://twitter.com/Sagebrush_Rebel/status/1093552133826215936?s=20

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/may/20/william-perry-pendley-trump-pick-top-environmental-post-endangered-species>

drained the department of scientific expertise, demoralized staff and left our public lands vulnerable to the whims of corporate polluters.⁶

Provoking further serious concerns about Pendley's nomination is his long list of conflicts of interest. According to his ethics disclosure, Pendley identified nearly 60 organizations, companies, and individuals that would trigger his recusal from decision-making at the BLM.⁷ Pendley has sued the BLM on behalf of rapacious special interests and extracting industries and challenged basic protections for public lands and endangered species. He represented clients seeking to mine uranium on protected lands bordering the Grand Canyon; drill in the sacred Badger-Two Medicine area near Glacier National Park; and revoke protections for Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments. These are all highly controversial petitions and ongoing cases that will require further input and decision-making by BLM leadership. Even if Pendley follows through on his promise to personally recuse himself from involvement in these dozens of important cases, it is hard to believe that his ideological views and personal financial interests will not influence the Bureau's approach to these matters.

Pendley's record of ethical indiscretions leaves us cold and wary as well. As the Department of Interior (DOI) Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy and Minerals under President Reagan, Pendley was found to have seriously mismanaged a coal leasing program that he would once again oversee as BLM Director. He cost the taxpayers \$100 million after he fixed a deal to lease the Powder River Basin to a coal mining company at "bargain basement prices."⁸ A GAO Report examining the controversial sale noted Pendley's cozy relationships with industry executives involved in the deal and corporate interests operating under his office's jurisdiction. For example, the GAO report highlighted "a dinner that Pendley and another Interior official and their wives attended with two coal company attorneys on March 19, 1982, the same day Pendley made a favorable decision regarding bids on Powder River Basin coal leases. The coal company officials picked up the entire \$494.45 tab, or \$1,343 in today's dollars."⁹ After the details of this corrupt lease deal became public, Pendley resigned. Placing Pendley at the helm of the BLM now sends a signal to the Bureau's employees that top officials will be once again cutting sweetheart deals with industry special interests instead of protecting the common good.

Compounding his ethical transgressions and ideological commitment to sell off our public lands is his inflammatory rhetoric on matters of racial justice and social inclusion. In the *Washington Examiner*, he argued that the Black Lives Matter movement "was built on a terrible lie."¹⁰ He has claimed that "Islam is at war with the United States,"¹¹ ¹² compared undocumented immigrants to "a cancer" and blamed them for spreading disease,¹³ argued that LGBTQ awareness programs

⁶ <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/486237-blm-exodus-agency-loses-half-of-dc-staff-slated-for-relocation>

⁷ <https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1061169147/>

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/02/09/us/report-finds-interior-department-mismanaged-coal-lease-program.html?searchResultPosition=3>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/02/09/us/report-finds-interior-department-mismanaged-coal-lease-program.html?searchResultPosition=3>

¹⁰ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/black-lives-matter-began-with-a-lie>

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/08/politics/william-perry-pendley-blm-kfile/index.html>

¹² https://twitter.com/Sagebrush_Rebel/status/1075189450508886017

¹³ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/08/politics/william-perry-pendley-blm-kfile/index.html>

do not belong in public schools,¹⁴ and publicly lambasted diversity-based inclusion initiatives.¹⁵ He also has a history of dismissing tribal sovereignty and questioning the religious importance of sacred lands to Native American communities.¹⁶ These positions render Pendley a bizarre choice to lead a diverse federal workforce at a time when we are working to confront systemic racism and inequality in our country. The American people deserve a leader at the BLM who will represent all Americans.

Pendley's fundamental opposition to the mission of the BLM, his stated desire to sell off our public lands, his dismal record of ethical transgressions and racially charged provocations render him unfit for this position. We urge you to rescind his nomination and remove him as Acting Director of the BLM immediately.

Very truly yours,



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
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TJ Cox
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

¹⁴ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/is-gender-instruction-part-of-sex-education>

¹⁵ https://twitter.com/Sagebrush_Rebel/status/1096050970264399872?s=20

¹⁶ <https://westernvaluesproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20200603-WVP-Research-Pendley-Criticized-Diversity-and-Inclusion-and-Insulted-Native-American-Religious-Traditions.pdf>

Andy Levin
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Steven Horsford
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Alcee L. Hastings
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Jerrold Nadler
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Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
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